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1) Desperate to hold on to power, Burmese military junta silences Aung San Suu Kyi; Japan's dialogue policy ineffective

ASAHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
August 12, 2009

Makoto Igarashi

The military junta in Burma (Mynmar), dropping all pretenses, has taken action to exclude Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the democratization movement in the country, from the general election to be held next year. Suu Kyi will be placed under house arrest and deprived of freedom of movement for 18 months, during which time, the junta plans to further consolidate its dictatorial rule. The international community's call for democratization has been ignored by the military junta, and the United Nations and the Japanese government are distressed by this situation.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the eldest daughter of General Aung San, "father of Burmese independence," was born in Rangoon (now Yangon) in 1945. She studied political science and other subjects in India and the UK and married British scholar Michael Aris (who passed away in 1999). She has been arrested and placed under house arrest on and off by the military junta since 1989 for a total of nearly 14 years. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone issued a statement criticizing the sentence pronounced on Suu Kyi, calling the verdict "extremely regrettable" and Suu Kyi's situation "extremely unfortunate." A

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senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs official lamented that, "We have to admit that Japan's persuasion had not been effective."

After Suu Kyi was prosecuted, Nakasone called Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win several times and asked for "appropriate handling" of this matter. While the Japanese government did not specify how it wanted the case to be handled out of consideration for the military junta, since "the administration of justice is an internal affair," it had in mind Suu Kyi's release.

Japan has so far adopted a policy different from the confrontational approach of Europe and America of imposing economic sanctions on the military junta. This was based on the thinking that maintaining links with the military government would enable the exercise of influence.

However, Japan's influence has been declining, losing ground to pro-military junta countries like China. In light of the verdict on Suu Kyi, the Western countries and the international community are expected to apply stronger pressure on the junta. The reality is that Japan does not have a strategy on what it can do to change the junta's attitude under this situation.

Japanese journalist Kenji Nagai was shot in September 2007 while engaged in news gathering during the anti-government demonstrations in Burma. The government has not even been successful in negotiating with Burma for the return of Nagai's personal belongings and investigation into his killing. It is possible that Japan will come under pressure from other countries to rectify its policy of moderation and dialogue.

Sophia University Professor Kei Nemoto, an expert on Burmese politics, points out that "indirect persuasion using words like 'appropriate handling' has no impact at all on the military junta."

AFGHAN RECONSTRUCTION

2) Foreign Ministry to send monitoring team of 10 observers for Afghan presidential election

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

The Foreign Ministry announced yesterday a plan to dispatch a team

of 10 observers, headed by Takehiro Kagawa, deputy director general of the ministry's Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, to Afghanistan to monitor the Aug. 20 presidential election. Coordination is underway between the ministry and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and other parties involved on which area the team should be sent. The observers will monitor vote counting.

3) DPJ President Hatoyama not considering direct dispatch of Self-Defense Forces for Afghan support

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

On a Nihon Television program the heads of the six parties met all together for the first time since the dissolution of the House of Representatives. They debated security and funding for policies.

Yukio Hatoyama, president of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ),  
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reiterated that he would not extend the Maritime Defense Force's refueling operation in the Indian Ocean, which is scheduled to end in January 2010. He was also cool toward replacing the refueling operation with assistance measures for the Afghan people. "The Self-Defense Forces are not always welcome," he said. "I'm not considering their direct dispatch." Prime Minister Aso Taro, president of the Liberal Democratic Party, stressed the importance of continuing the refueling operation. "The refueling operation has had a major impact," he said.

On the same day Hatoyama mentioned the refueling operation during a press conference for foreign media. "Simply put, the refueling operation will not be extended past January (of next year)." He also asserted that he "would like to chart a course that could lead to cooperation in helping the Afghan Government with nation-building and in stabilizing the lives of the Afghan people."

During the program the Prime Minister and Hatoyama also exchanged words over the child allowance. "Funding of 5 trillion yen is necessary," said Aso. "That amount can be realized by slashing waste, although what should be cut is a question." Hatoyama responded that if the budget was reviewed, "there would be funding."

Kazuo Shii, chairman of the Japanese Communist Party, criticized the ruling parties, noting that "child support (in Japan) is at the lowest level among advanced nations." He also attacked the DPJ, pointing out that its budget plan would "raise taxes for 6 million households."

DPJ IN SPOTLIGHT

4) DPJ releases five revisions to manifesto, including Japan-U.S. FTA

MAINICHI (Top Play) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) released five revisions to its manifesto (campaign pledges), including wording about a free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S. It has formally incorporated the establishment of a venue for consultation between the central and local governments. It has also added three items -a growth strategy, improved assistance for fertility treatment, and an explanation of the details of a pension tax system. The DPJ has reflected in its manifesto since its release on July 27 proposals made by several members of the Association of Prefectural Governors and agricultural organizations, and views heard at briefings given at 10 locations throughout the country. This will be the final version of its manifesto. The DPJ's revisions to key policy measures have incurred the criticism of the ruling parties and the public. As such, there is concern about its impact on its election campaigns.

Regarding an FTA with the U.S., the wording has been changed from "will sign" to "promote talks." The wording "measures that could hamper the promotion of domestic agriculture or farm villages will

not be adopted" has been added. Regarding economic partnership agreements (EPA) and FTAs with various countries in the Asia-Pacific region, too, the wording "proactively promote the signing of EPAs or FTAs" has been replaced with the wording "proactively promoting talks."

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Concerning child-rearing and education, wording that the party will consider approving the use of medical insurance for fertility treatment to improve assistance has been added to the item noting that the economic burden of childbirth would be reduced. Those proposals were mentioned in the Index 2009, the basis of the manifesto, covering the details of policies in each area. Since the party received many inquiries, when it released the package, it decided to clearly mention those proposals in the manifesto.

Some have pointed out that since deduction for spouse would be abolished in place of the establishment of child allowance, the burden on pensioners might increase.

For this reason, the DPJ has decided to stress that regarding the pension tax system, as the deduction for public pensions is to be expanded and the deduction for the elderly people is to be restored, the tax burden shouldered by pension recipients will be reduced.

The growth strategy has been newly incorporated in response to criticism from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and business circles that there was no reference to one. The DPJ's growth strategy says that the party will increase the disposable income of households with such policies as the introduction of a child allowance and toll-free expressways and realize stable economic growth by changing the Japanese economy to one driven by domestic demand.

5) Faced with criticism, DPJ revises manifesto, exposes internal discord

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) announced revisions to its manifesto (campaign pledges) on August 11 because of complaints from the concerned groups about the manifesto it published on July 27. It can also be said that this situation has exposed the half-baked debate in the party.

At his news conference on August 11, DPJ Policy Research Committee chief Masayuki Naoshima reacted strongly to the view that he was presenting a "revised version" of the party's manifesto. He asserted that, "This is not a revision of the standing policies of the DPJ, but a more detailed version of policies already presented. In that sense, it is not a revision."

However, when President Yukio Hatoyama presented the previous manifesto, he had gone as far as declaring that he would "take responsibility if the policies in the manifesto are not implemented." Subsequently, when faced with criticism of the document, he changed tack and said, "The manifesto published on July 27 is not the official one," explaining that this was a "provisional version."

The DPJ has been forced to revise its manifesto because the document was drafted by only a handful of senior officials in order to prevent the leaking of information to other parties. For this reason, the failure to include "legislation on a body for consultations between the national and local governments," which had been a hot issue with the national association of governors, came under fire even inside the party.

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The DPJ has added its economic growth strategy in the manifesto in

haste after the business sector and experts pointed out the absence of such a strategy. A senior party official expresses his regret, saying, "We failed to pay attention to the details."

Farming groups also reacted strongly to the pledge on a free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S., which prompted a senior party official to soften the expression on "concluding" a FTA to "promoting the negotiations" for a FTA because "this has caused misunderstanding." However, Deputy President Ichiro Ozawa has objected to the revision, saying, "There is nothing wrong" with the original wording. Discord within the leadership has also been exposed.

Meanwhile, the ruling parties are critical of the DPJ's behavior.

During a stumping speech in Matsudo City, Chiba Prefecture in the early evening of August 11, Prime Minister Taro Aso said: "(The DPJ) keeps changing its position and wavering. They have revised their manifesto after publishing it. You cannot trust such an administration." One senior Liberal Democratic Party official quips that, "The DPJ is merely applying another layer of makeup."

6) Hatoyama again fuzzy about codifying three no-nuclear principles, suggesting issue may be put off

SANKEI (Page 4) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Yukio Hatoyama, in a press conference at party headquarters for the foreign media, said this about codifying the three no-nuclear principles: "There have been a number of requests and we are studying it, but while considering such, I would like debate if it is really appropriate." He suggested that the result of the study might be put off.

While in Nagasaki on August 9, he had just told a group of atomic-bomb victims who had requested the principles be made into law: "It is important to protect the three principles. I promise that the party will give proper consideration (to codifying them)." But only two days later, he made the above statement, prompting criticism from the ruling camp that he was again blurring the issue.

7) DPJ President Hatoyama says he will not visit Yasukuni

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Yukio Hatoyama said in a press conference before foreign reporters at party headquarters yesterday that he would not visit Yasukuni Shrine if his party assumes power. He remarked: "I have no intention to visit the shrine." He indicated that all cabinet members should also forgo paying homage there, saying: "I want cabinet ministers to avoid a visit."

The press conference was held for about one hour before about 100 reporters of 40 or so TV, newspaper and news companies from the U.S. and Asian and European countries. In reference to the 1995 Murayama Statement expressing deep remorse and apology for Japan's prewar

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colonial rule, Hatoyama said that the statement was worked out when he was the chairman of the New Party Sakigake. He then emphasized: "I will naturally respect the statement once the party takes over the reins of government." Regarding the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, he suggested that he would not approve the mission beyond its expiration next January. Further, he expressed his eagerness to have Japan involved more in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan.

The party specifies in its manifesto for the upcoming House of Representatives election that the party would propose a revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement. On this proposal, Hatoyama just said: "I would like to establish a relationship of trust with President Barack Obama, make a comprehensive review, and

then judge whether discussing the issue is possible." Hatoyama said on Aug. 9 that he would study the possibility of codifying the three nonnuclear principles. But he indicated a cautious view about it once again, saying: "I would like to look into the possibility, but I still wonder if the principles lend themselves well to legislation."

8) Association of mayors of chartered cities commends DPJ manifesto

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

The association of mayors of chartered cities made up of the mayors of 18 chartered cities in the country announced on August 11 its scores for the manifestos (campaign pledges) of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), New Komeito, and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) on the subject of decentralization of power. The DPJ got the highest score at 54.5 points; the New Komeito got 50.12 points; while the LDP was given 49.5 points.

Seventeen mayors, excepting the mayor of Kitakyushu, participated in the rating process. The parties were rated on 10 policies, such as substantial transfer of power to the chartered cities and abolition of local governments' share in national government projects, on a scale of 100, and the average of the 10 scores became the final score. Kawasaki City Mayor Takao Abe, vice chairman of the group, stated at a news conference that, "The DPJ got the highest score for its pledge to transfer substantial powers to the chartered cities."

9) Policies on decentralization reforms convince political group of local government heads to support DPJ

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

Local government heads set up a political group to reveal which political party they support in the upcoming House of Representatives election. In a press conference at the Osaka prefectural government building yesterday, its members - Osaka Governor Toru Hashimoto and Yokohama Mayor Hiroshi Nakada - announced that the group backs the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), based on its assessment of the policy platforms (manifestos) for the election of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the DPJ. They said that the decision was based on its high evaluation of the party's proposals on decentralization reforms. The assessment of the National Governors' Association on Aug. 8 was in favor of the LDP.

"It is now necessary to build a mechanism to manage a government led

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by politicians," Hashimoto said in the press conference. "In light of this point, we decided to back the DPJ." Nakada commented: "The DPJ is about to change the nation by making full use of the momentum for a change of government. The DPJ's manifesto reveals a willingness to carry out fundamental reforms more clearly than the LDP's."

Hashimoto was elected in the last Osaka gubernatorial election with support from the LDP and the New Komeito. Probably with that in mind, he said: "I personally am not issuing an expression of support. ... I will support neither the LDP nor the DPJ in this decisive general election. I cannot turn the lawmakers (of the LDP and the New Komeito) against me and hold a megaphone for the DPJ."

DPJ Secretary General Katsuya Okada welcomed the group's assessment last night: "We appreciate the local government heads' evaluation. We would like to promote decentralization reforms in cooperation with them." He made this remark in replying to questions by reporters in Matsudo, Chiba Prefecture.

10) LDP, New Komeito adopt common campaign pledges on refueling mission, anti-piracy, cargo inspection

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and New Komeito will include in the "Major Policies of the Ruling Coalition Parties," a document listing the common campaign pledges of the two parties for the House of Representatives election, foreign and security policies including the continuation of the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and anti-piracy operations in waters off Somalia and legislation for the inspection of cargo on ships entering and leaving North Korea.

The purpose of this is to highlight the ruling parties' difference with the Democratic Party of Japan, whose president, Yukio Hatoyama has announced that the refueling mission of the Maritime Self-Defense Force in the Indian Ocean based on the new special antiterrorism measures law will not be extended after the law expires next January.

Furthermore, they will also add an agriculture, forestry, and fisheries policy of "increasing farmers' income and food supply capacity as Japan's economic growth strategy." With regard to the implementation of drastic tax reforms, including an increase in the consumption tax rate, after economic recovery, which they have already agreed to include as common policy, the two parties will add the passage "with due consideration for low income earners."

The two parties plan to announce their common campaign pledges on the morning of August 12.

11) Proposal for blanket ban on Atlantic tuna trade: Half of the amount Japan consumes will disappear

ASAHI (Page 9) (Excerpts)  
August 12, 2009

Moves to totally ban international trade of Atlantic tuna, which is known as the best-quality tuna, by including it in the Washington Treaty to protect wild animals, have begun spreading in Europe. The realization of the envisaged ban will likely have a major impact on

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Japan, which consumes 80 percent of blue fin tuna caught in the world.

Monaco is aiming to propose including Atlantic tuna in Appendix I of the Washington Treaty at a conference of parties of the Washington Treaty to be held in March 2010.

Why is Monaco, which is not a tuna-fishing country, making such a move? A scientific statistics commission consisting of experts at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) recommended reducing the bluefin tuna catch from 32,000 tons in 2007 to less than 15,000 tons, citing overexploitation as a reason. However, Spain and France, which have tuna fishing areas, opposed the proposal. They set their catch quotas at 19,950 tons for 2010 and 18,500 tons for 2011. The Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) has been increasingly opposing such moves.

The Japanese government takes a position of opposing the proposal to include bluefin tuna in the Treaty. It intends to propose decreasing catch quotas following the scientific statistics commission at the ICCAT meeting in November, maintaining, "The basic stance should be that an international agency will properly control the tuna catch and make efforts to restore tuna resources." Japan's consumption of tuna was 43,000 tons in 2008. If the Monaco proposal is adopted, 20,000 tons will disappear from Japan-bound tuna exports. Japan's import drop will be smaller if the scientific statistics commission's proposal is adopted.

12) Economists expect positive GDP growth in April-June period

ASAHI (Page 7) (Excerpts)  
August 12, 2009

The country's gross domestic product may have marked positive growth in the April-June period. The rise would be the first time since the January-March period in 2008. The average growth rate of private-sector groups' predictions is at the 3% level. The brighter forecast is attributed to a pickup in personal consumption and

exports.

The Cabinet Office's auxiliary organization asked 36 private-sector economists about their prediction from July 27 through Aug. 3.

The economists expect the GDP in the April-June quarter may have risen 3.03% in annualized terms, surpassing the 1.98% rise forecast last month. This positive result comes after recent data show greater demand of automobiles and flat TV sets owing to the government's series of economic stimulus packages, such as tax cuts for eco-friendly cars, as well as rising exports to China.

### 13) Record high natural population decline

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)  
August 12, 2009

The Internal Affairs Ministry on August 11 announced the national population as of March 31 this year, based on the Basic Resident Register. Japan's population (excluding foreign nationals) stands at 127,076,183, up 10,005 from the year earlier, marking the second consecutive increase. The increase is ascribable to a social increase in population, including returnees from abroad and naturalization, from 41,826 marked in the previous year to 55,919.

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However, the natural decrease in population determined by deducting the number of deaths from that of childbirths was minus 45,914, marking the largest decline. The survey result has highlighted that the decline in the nation's population is accelerating.

The number of births was 1,088,488, down 7,977 from the year earlier, taking a downturn for the first time in three years. The number of deaths marked a record 1,134,402. Regarding the rise in the social increase in population, the ministry noted that the closing of companies' overseas branches following the deteriorating economic situation is conceivable as one reason for that. The statistics also found that over ten thousand foreign nationals became naturalized citizens.

The population of the three major urban zones - the Tokyo area, the Nagoya area and the Kansai area - is 64,012,618, or 50.37 percent of the total population. The population in the Kansai area, including Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo and Nara, is 18,233,496, marking the first increase in five years. The population of Tokyo stands at 12,5482,58, an increase of 860,062 in comparison with the previous year. The rate of increase marked a record high 0.69 percent, indicating an ongoing trend of the population becoming increasingly concentrated in Tokyo.

ZUMWALT